

FUN FACTS FOR S T A R - S P A N G L E D B A N N E R F A N S

- 1 . Did you know that in the early 1800's a ship without a flag was thought to be a pirate ship?
- 2 . Did you know the Pledge of Allegiance wasn't written by the Founding Fathers? The first pledge was written in September, 1892 for Columbus Day. Over ten million kids recited this first pledge.
- 3 . Did you know that Francis Scott Key wrote his most famous poem on the back of a letter?
- 4 . Did you know that "The Star-Spangled Banner" had competition for the title of National Anthem? In the 1920s many people wanted "America the Beautiful" to be the National Anthem, because it was easier to sing and less violent.
- 5 . Did you know that when "The Defense of Fort McHenry" was first published, credit was given only to "a gentleman of Maryland"?
- 6 . Did you know Francis Scott Key wrote silly poems too? "Look for the hen with yellow legs,
For she's the hen that lays these eggs." He wrote this little rhyme on an egg!
- 7 . Did you know Francis Scott Key was a founder of the American Colonization Society, a group which built a settlement for freed slaves on the west coast of Africa?
- 8 . Did you know "The Star-Spangled Banner" is sung to the melody of "To Anacreon in Heaven", a gentlemen's drinking song?
- 9 . Did you know that during Francis Scott Key's time "To Anacreon in Heaven" was one of the most popular songs in America and England. At least 85 American poems were fitted to the tune.
- 10 . Did you know the American flag flies 24 hours a day at Fort M c H e n r y, Francis Scott Key's birthplace and his gravesite?
- 11 . Did you know "The Star-Spangled Banner" was not officially adopted as our national anthem until March 3, 1931? President Herbert Hoover proclaimed the 117-year-old song our national anthem!
- 12 . Did you know not a single flag flying during Revolutionary Wa r battles was designed by Betsy Ross?
- 13 . Did you know that a young widow by the name of Mary Pickersgill and her daughter Caroline were the women who sewed the actual S t a r-Spangled Banner?
- 14 . Did you know Mary Pickersgill's mother was also in the flag business? Her mother, Rebecca Young, made some of the first banners of the American colonies.
- 15 . Did you know that a storm flag is a small flag used during bad weather and battles? A garrison flag is the large flag used for display purposes.
- 16 . Did you know that it took Mary Pickersgill six weeks to make the storm flag and the garrison flag that would become the Star- S p a n g l e d Banner? Today a flag factory in New Jersey makes 3 million stars for modern flags in about one month.
- 17 . Did you know that Mary Pickersgill was paid \$405.90 for the Star-Spangled Banner and \$168.54 for the smaller storm flag—a total of \$574.44? Her House cost \$1500.
- 18 . Did you know that the Star-Spangled Banner weighs about 50 pounds without its linen backing?
- 19 . Did you know that the flag became too big for Mary Pickersgill to finish sewing in her home? She had to relocate to a local brewery to finish it there.
- 20 . Did you know that a single star from the Star-Spangled Banner is almost twice as large as your head? Mary Pickersgill sewed each one by hand.
- 21 . Did you know that the Americans were defending Fort McHenry against the British?
- 22 . Did you know what the Star-Spangled Banner was made of? 300 hundred yards of English wool bunting.
- 23 . Did you know that the stars are made of cotton, which was a luxury material in 1813?
- 24 . Did you know that Major George Armistead was the commander of Fort McHenry during the War of 1812?
- 25 . Did you know that over 1,500 shells and 700 rockets were fired at Fort McHenry in a 25-hour period? Only 4 Americans were killed and 24 were wounded.
- 26 . Did you know that a storm flag is not only used in poor weather? I t 's also used in battles.
- 27 . Did you know over half a million people visit Fort McHenry each year?
- 28 . Did you know that the original Star-Spangled Banner measured 30 feet by 42 feet?
- 29 . Did you know that the War of 1812 is referred to as the "second war of independence"?
- 30 . Did you know Fort McHenry is shaped like a star?
- 31 . Did you know that Eben Appleton, Major George Armistead's grandson, gave the Star-Spangled Banner to the Smithsonian Institution in 1912?

The Star-Spangled Banner

by Francis Scott Key (1814)

*O say can you see by the dawn's early light,
What so proudly we hailed at the twilight's last gleaming;
Whose broad stripes and bright stars, through the perilous fight,
O'er the ramparts we watched, were so gallantly streaming?
And the rockets' red glare, the bombs bursting in air,
Gave proof through the night that our flag was still there,
O say, does that star-spangled banner yet wave
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave?*

*On the shore dimly seen through the mists of the deep,
Where the foe's haughty host in dread silence reposes,
What is that which the breeze, o'er the towering steep,
As it fitfully blows, now conceals, now discloses?
Now it catches the gleam of the morning's first beam,
In full glory reflected now shines on the stream,
'Tis the star-spangled banner - O long may it wave
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave!*

*And where is that band who so vauntingly swore,
That the havoc of war and the battle's confusion
A home and a country should leave us no more?
Their blood has washed out their foul footsteps' pollution.
No refuge could save the hireling and slave
From the terror of flight, or the gloom of the grave,
And the star-spangled banner in triumph doth wave
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave!*

*Oh! thus be it ever, when freemen shall stand
Between their loved homes and the war's desolation!
Blest with victory and peace, may the heaven-rescued land
Praise the Power that hath made and preserved us a nation.
Then conquer we must, for our cause it is just,
And this be our motto: "In God is our trust,"
And the star-spangled banner in triumph shall wave
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave*

Sources for The Star-Spangled Banner

1. Document 1: **Letter from Caroline Pickersgill Purdy to Georgiana Armistead Appleton, Baltimore, (1876).** Original letter is located at the Massachusetts Historical Society. Note: Students using this document for the “Historians are Detectives” activity need only

read the first four paragraphs, ending with the sentence that reads, “The flag contained, I think, four hundred yards of bunting, and my mother worked many nights until 12 o’clock to complete it in the given time.”

“Mrs. Appleton.

Dear Madam. I have lately seen in the newspapers that the noted flag which waved over Fort McHenry in the bombardment of Baltimore: is in your possession, and is to be sent to the Centennial.

I take the liberty to send you a few particulars about the “Flag”. It was made by my mother, Mrs. Mary Pickersgill, and I assisted her. My grandfather, Rebecca Young made the first flag of the Revolution, (under General Washington’s direction) and for this reason my mother

was selected by Commo. Barney and General Stricker, (family connections), to make this “Star Spangled Banner” which she did, being an exceedingly exceedingly patriotic woman.

The flag being so very large, my mother was obliged to obtain permission from the proprietors of Claggetts brewery which was in our neighborhood, to spread it out in their malt house; and I remember seeing my mother down on the floor, placing the stars: after the completion of the flag, she superintended the topping of it, having it fastened in the most secure manner to prevent its being torn away by (cannon) balls: the wisdom of her precaution was shown during the engagement: many shots piercing it, but it still remained firm to the staff. Your father (Col. Armistead) declared that no one but the maker of the flag should mend it, and requested that the rents should be merely bound around.

The flag contained, I think, four hundred yards of bunting, and my mother worked many nights until 12 o’clock to complete it in the given time. I would also state, that many of my ancestors were in the Revolution. My grandfather William Young was a captain in the war: my uncle Col.

Flower was “Commissary General of Military stores”, and Colonel of Artillery” - these, both lost their lives by camp fever; I had another uncle taken prisoner by the British, and whipped through the fleet for attempting to escape: and my father-in-law, Henry Purdy, served through the war.

For my character and position I could refer you to Miss Margaret Purviance, or any other reference you would require; I could further recall myself to your recollection, as I was a Manager of the “Aged

Woman’s” Home at the same time you were, and was particularly fascinated with you, (both being Episcopalians) in the care of a Mrs. Jefferson, daughter of Ms. Whipple a signer of the Declaration of

Independence. Your kindness and prompt attention to her induced me to present

my case to you. I am widowed and childless, and now find myself, in my seventy sixth year, in feeble health, and with the barest pittance of support. My friends here in Balto. – have suggested that if these particulars, met with your approbation, and were placed on a card attached to the flag, they might excite among patriotic people, some compassion for my helpless condition; but I would leave this matter entirely up to your judgement. I have not been able to write, on account of not having the use of my right arm, but thought it was better to put the signature in my own hand with kind regards. I trust in your sympathy.

(Sgd) C. Purdy (full name Caroline Purdy)

Letter from Caroline Purdy appears courtesy of the Massachusetts Historical Society.

6. Document 6: **From The History Channel’s interview with Ronald Becker, Associate Director of Capital Programs, at the National Museum of American History, June 15, 1998:**

“ [The Star-Spangled Banner] takes in our entire history. And so, in that way, this is an artifact that not only connects to all of us, but it ties us together. It’s a symbol of unity and I think for those reasons it’s extraordinarily powerful.”

2 . Document 2: A clipping from Benson J. Lossing's magazine *The American Historical Record* 2:13 (Jan., 1873):

"The Star-Spangled Banner: Late in the autumn of 1861 I visited Fort McHenry at Baltimore; and in company with the late Capt. John P e t e r, a veteran of the War of 1812, I went out to the battle ground of North Point ... and other places connected with events which inspired Francis S. Key to write the song entitled "The Star-Spangled Banner". On our return I called upon Mr. Christopher Hughes Armistead, son of Colonel George Armistead, the commander of Fort McHenry in 1814, who kindly showed me the identical flag of which Key inquired "O, say, does that Star-Spangled banner yet wave o'er the land of the free and the home of the brave?" Mr. Armistead spread it out on his parlor floor. It was the regular garrison flag faded and worn by exposure to storms and missiles. It had eleven holes in it, made there by the shot of the British during the bombardment of Fort McHenry."

3 . Document 3: Account by Midshipman Robert J. Barrett, age 15, aboard HM Frigate Hebrus during the bombardment of Fort M c H e n r y, September 13-14, 1814 (as related many years later in 1 8 4 1) . The following narrative account was published by "Naval Recollections," *United Service Journal*, April 1841, page 464. It is the only known reference to the flag by a British naval or military person who was present during the bombardment.

"Thus, after bombarding the forts and harbour of Baltimore for twentyfour hours, the squadron of frigates weighed, without firing a shot, upon the forenoon of the 14th, and were immediately followed by the bombs and sloops of war. In truth, it was a galling spectacle for the British seamen to behold. And, as the last vessel spread her canvas to the wind, the Americans hoisted a most superb and splendid ensign on their b a t t e r y, and fired at the same time a gun of defiance"

M i d s h i p m a n 's account appears courtesy of Fort McHenry National Monument Library, National Park Service

4 . Document 4: A letter from Eben Appleton to Charles Wa l c o t t , Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, 1912

New Yo r k December 12th, 1912

M r. Charles Walcott, Secty Smithsonian Institute Washington, D.C.

Dear Sir:

If agreeable to you and the authorities in charge of the National Museum, I shall be very glad to present to that Institution the flag owned by me, and now in possession of the Museum as a loan from me, and known as the Star-Spangled Banner. It has always been my intention to present this flag during my lifetime to that Institution in the country where it could be conveniently seen by the public, and where it would be well cared for, and the advantages and appropriateness of the National Museum are so obvious, as to render consideration of any other place unnecessary. . .

Very truly yours,

Eben Appleton 32 Liberty Street Box 44 New Yo r k

Letter from Eben Appleton appears courtesy of the National Museum of American History.

5. Document 5: From The History Channel's interview with Spencer Crew, Executive Director of the National Museum of American History, June 15, 1998:

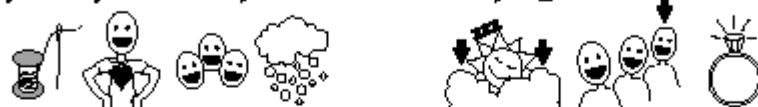
"Our task is really to preserve American history. And the flag project sort of symbolizes all the other projects that are part and parcel of the work that we do here....It's really our task as the caretaker of the flag to make sure that any steps we take in terms of examining it and trying to make sure that it continues to exist are done thoughtfully and carefully and in the best possible way."

Name _____

The Star Spangled Banner

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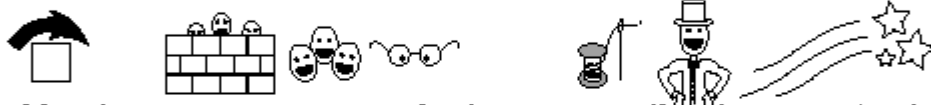
O! say can you see by the dawn's early light,



What so proudly we hailed at the twilight's last gleaming,



Whose broad stripes and bright stars through the perilous fight,



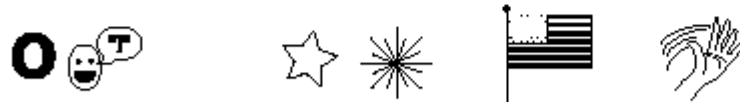
O'er the ramparts we watched were so gallantly streaming?



And the rockets' red glare, the bombs bursting in air,



Gave proof through the night that our flag was still there;



O! say does that star spangled banner yet wave,



O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave?

This illustrated lyrics sheet is designed to help early readers and non-fluently speaking learners learn the words to The Star Spangled Banner, the U.S. National Anthem.
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